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ABSTRACT

In 1996, the Council of Bishops called upon the United Methodist Church to reshape its mission in response to the crisis among children and the impoverished within the primary goal of evangelization. As one response to the Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty, congregations may undertake specific actions to make their churches more responsive to the needs of children and their families in the church and community. This document comprises resources to assist churches that want to qualify as "A Church for All God's Children." Guidelines identify the steps to follow in qualifying for recognition. A Checklist details goals and activities to: (1) educate the congregation about the needs of children and the poor; (2) make the church facilities safe and welcoming for children and families; (3) reduce the risk of child abuse; (4) help children grow as faithful disciples; (5) involve children in the life of the church; (6) reach out to children in the community; (7) advocate for legislation and public policies that improve children's lives and lives of poor families; (8) relate to children around the world; and (9) build administrative supports for ministry with children and the poor. The document also includes a list of 45 resources to assist in the church's efforts. Finally, a reporting form is provided for use in detailing activity completion (KB)

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A Church for All God's Children

Congregations Responding to the Needs of Children in the Church and Community

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A Church for All God's Children

Introduction

In 1996, the Council of Bishops called upon The United Methodist Church to reshape its life in response to the crisis among children and the impoverished and in faithfulness to Jesus Christ. In the Biblical and Theological Foundations document sent to every United Methodist congregation, the Bishops outlined goals for their Initiative on Children and Poverty:

- *The crisis among children and the impoverished and our theological and historical mandates demand more than additional programs or emphases. Nothing less than the reshaping of The United Methodist Church in response to the God who is among "the least of these" is required.*
- *Providing resources for understanding the crisis among children and the impoverished and enabling the Church to respond is also a goal of the Initiative.*
- *The primary goal is evangelization, the proclamation in word and deed of the gospel of God's redeeming, reconciling and transforming grace in Jesus Christ to and with the children and those oppressed by poverty.*

As one response to the Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty, congregations are invited to undertake specific actions to make their churches more responsive to the needs of children and their families in the church and community. This packet contains resources (checklist, guidelines, resource list, and reporting form) to assist churches that want to qualify as "A Church for All God's Children." Four general program boards of The United Methodist Church have cooperated to produce this packet. Your Bishop has sent it to you and is encouraging your church to consider participating in this special effort.

Churches that successfully complete the required activities on the Checklist will be recognized by their Bishop and presented with a certificate.

The decision to participate in this effort should be made by the Church Council, and coordination assigned either to an already-established committee of the church or to a task force appointed for this specific purpose. See the Guidelines sheet for more detailed instructions and suggestions.

There are many other ways your church can respond to the challenge of the Bishops' Initiative on Children and Poverty. Making your church more child-friendly and hospitable to poor families through the use of this Checklist is one way. Please do not undertake this effort lightly. Remember that the focus of the Initiative, in the closing words of the Bishops' foundation document, ". . . is on communicating and living the gospel of Jesus Christ with all children and intentionally reaching out to impoverished persons as recipients and means of God's grace in Jesus Christ."

The illustrations in this packet are used with permission from *God and Me: Never Alone*, a collection of prayers and drawings by the children of the Mississippi Annual Conference.

A Church for All God's Children

Guidelines

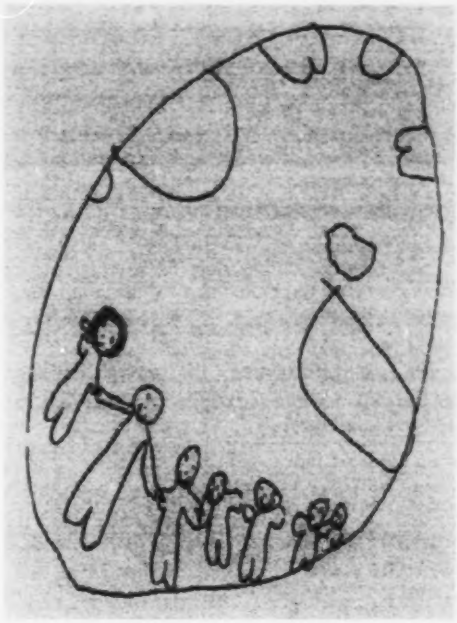
Steps to follow in qualifying for recognition as "A Church for All God's Children"

INVITATION

The Bishop's Initiative on Children and Poverty invites all United Methodist congregations to respond to the needs and receive the gifts of children and the poor. Becoming "A Church for All God's Children" is one important and joyful way local congregations can respond in faithful discipleship.

CHURCH COUNCIL APPROVAL

Becoming "A Church for All God's Children" represents a significant commitment of time and energy on the part of the congregation and its leadership. Therefore, the idea should be presented to the Church Council for discussion and action.



Ashley Roark. Palestine UMC, Nettleton, Miss.

TIMELINE

The activities on the checklist are comprehensive and most will require considerable effort over an extended period of time. Do not expect to "zip" through the process quickly. The impact on the life of your church and community will be deeper and more long-lasting if this effort is approached with care and time is taken to be thorough. Participating annual conferences will probably be recognizing "Churches for All God's Children" once a year. They will provide you with a date by which they should have your reporting form in hand. You will be wise to give your church at least a year to work toward completion of the required activities.

OVERSIGHT

A small group of persons should be named by the Church Council to oversee the process of selecting appropriate activities from the list and coordinating their completion. While some churches may find it helpful to assign this task to an already-existing committee, others will want to name a task force specifically for this purpose. Consider naming one or more children to the committee. Regular progress reports to the Church Council will keep them informed and involved.

BUDGET

While many, indeed most, of the activities on the checklist will require little or no expenditure of funds, the committee may need a modest budget, mainly for purchase of resources that relate to certain of the activities. Some of the optional activities involve development of new programs. These would of course have to go through the regular program approval process of the church and any required budget would be part of the consideration at that point.

PARTICIPATION

The more adults, youth, and children from your church who are involved in the process, the better your chances that this effort will be fruitful. You will find that a number of the activities, some of the mandatory ones as well as some of the optional ones, call for the establishment of committees or task forces to coordinate specific pieces of work. While it may seem more efficient to have one or a few groups do all of these tasks, and while smaller congregations may find that necessary, remember that this is about commitment and involvement more than it is about efficiency. There is value in spreading the work around and having as many people as possible share the joy of making your church child-friendly and hospitable to poor families.

RESOURCES

Throughout the checklist, you will find references to print and audio-visual resources as well as to organizations and programs. While some addresses and phone numbers are included in the checklist, all are listed in the resources section.

GETTING STARTED

Once the decision to undertake this effort is made and an oversight committee or task force is appointed, make copies of the Checklist for each member. Among the tasks that the oversight group will want to undertake in the early stages are:

a. An unhurried discussion of the concept, in order for everyone to feel informed;

b. Initial selection of activities to be undertaken, recognizing that some changes may have to be made once the process is underway;

c. Identification of persons in the church and the community who need to be consulted;

d. Plans for keeping the Church Council and the congregation informed of progress.

DISCERNMENT

All activities will not be appropriate for all churches. If an optional activity is clearly beyond your church's means or irrelevant to your church's situation, go on to another alternative. (At the same time, do not dismiss any possibility too quickly or simply because it will present a challenge — this may be precisely the act of witness or discipleship your church is being called to undertake!) If a mandatory activity is for some reason not possible for your church, undertake an activity as close in intent as possible to the original, and attach to your report form an explanation of why the substitution was necessary. You will note that there is an "other" category in each section. It is placed there to accommodate the situations described earlier in this paragraph, and as acknowledgment that local situations vary widely and that wisdom and creativity are abundant among local churches. It is assumed that use of the "other" category, either in place of or in addition to fulfillment of the required number of listed activities, will be consistent with the stated goal of the section and will represent a new activity of the congregation.

DOCUMENTATION

Since the Reporting Form requires that documentation of each activity be attached, the oversight group will need to keep careful records and preserve copies of minutes, articles in the bulletin and newsletter, flyers, photographs, newspaper clippings, etc. Consider naming one member as keeper of the official list, records, minutes, etc.

REPORTING

Your annual conference will establish a date by which you need to report in order to be recognized as "A Church for All God's Children." This packet should be accompanied by a letter from your Bishop, giving that (those) date(s) and letting you know where and to whom the reporting form and accompanying documentation should be sent. If you do not have that information, call the Bishop's office, or ask your District Superintendent to help you find out. The enclosed Reporting Form should be used unless your Bishop or annual conference has indicated otherwise. Make certain that you have attached a brief description of your church's response to each activity you marked as completed and any supporting materials as indicated in the instructions on the Reporting Form.

RECOGNITION

Your annual conference is responsible for determining if your church has qualified to be recognized as "A Church for All God's Children" and for deciding where and how recognition will take place. If the recognition happens at a session of the Annual Conference or another event away from your church, the delegation accepting the recognition should include at least one child.

CONTINUATION

This endeavor is intended to help you transform your congregation into a more "child-friendly" place, one that welcomes and stands with "the least of these." It is not something that can be done once and for all; it must receive ongoing attention. Once initial recognition has been achieved, you will want to establish a process by which you will continually evaluate, update and expand your church's ministry with children in the church and the community. You may choose to disband any special task force that was established to guide the process and transfer the ongoing responsibility to a standing committee, or you may choose to continue the task force. Watch your mail and church publications for information about ways to share updates about your ongoing activities.

A Church for All God's Children

CHECKLIST

IMPORTANT: This Checklist should be used with the Guidelines and Reporting Form contained in this packet. Order information for resources mentioned here will be found in the Resources list at the end of this Checklist.

A. EDUCATING THE CONGREGATION ABOUT THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND THE POOR

GOAL: To sensitize United Methodist congregations to circumstances faced by children and by poor families in order that churches might respond with acts of compassion and justice. ***In this section, complete #1 and at least two others.***

1. Assess the needs of children in your community by:
   a. forming a committee or task force;
   b. ordering copies of *Putting Children and Their Families First: A Planning Handbook for Congregations* from Service Center (1-800-305-9857);
   c. using the handbook to guide the committee's assessment process;
   d. reporting findings to the congregation.

Kristen Hensleigh. Purvis UMC, Purvis, Miss.

2. Celebrate annual Children's Sabbath by:
   a. designating a Sunday in October, or another Sunday during the year, as Children's Sabbath;
   b. ordering Children's Sabbath Resource Kit from the Children's Defense Fund (202-662-3589);
   c. using the materials, not only in worship on the designated Sunday, but in related adult and children's church school and weekday programs.
3. Hold a study series on the needs of children and the poor, attended by at least 10% of the adults in the congregation, using a book such as *Welcome the Child, It Takes a Village*, or *Amazing Grace*. Consider beginning the series by showing the video, "Listen to the Children."
4. Have a sermon series, three to four weeks in length, on the needs of children, with an emphasis on children in widely differing circumstances and communities.
5. Hold a series (at least two sessions) of seminars on the needs of children in your community, to include one "hearing" with a panel of various community leaders and one "open mike" session to hear from children themselves.
6. Hold a series of educational sessions (at least two) on recent research on brain development of children from birth to age three. Use this information to evaluate your church's support for young parents and its care for the very young. (See resources listed under "Brain Research.")
7. Using resources from Children's Defense Fund, offer a "Child Watch" program to sensitize adults in the congregation to the needs of children in the community.
8. Keep the congregation posted on issues of children and poverty through:
   a. a bulletin insert one Sunday each month giving updated information on the status of local, state and federal legislation affecting children and families and statistics on children and poverty in your state. Some excellent sources of current state-by-state information are *Kids Count Data Book*, and *The State of America's Children Yearbook*.
   b. a regular column on children with legislative alerts and other current information in each issue of the church newsletter;
   c. a Children and Poverty bulletin board in a strategic location in the church, updated regularly with information on poverty in your state/city/county and on the status of local, state, and federal legislation dealing with issues such as hunger, housing, employment.
9. Make it possible for the pastor and other church staff to attend a continuing education event on the needs of children.
10. Other _____
    _____

B. MAKING CHURCH FACILITIES SAFE AND WELCOMING FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

GOAL: To evaluate and modify church buildings, equipment, and furnishings so that they are safe, appropriate, and hospitable. ***In this section, complete #1 and at least one other.***

1. Give a special task force responsibility for evaluating and ensuring the safety of the facilities, such as:
   a. electrical outlets protected with child-proof devices;
   b. water fountains at child height or equipped with sturdy steps;
   c. child-sized bathroom facilities;
   d. buildings checked for lead and asbestos;
   e. playgrounds safe, secure, and supervised;
   f. hand-rails on stairs reachable by a 3-year-old;
   g. child-height directional signs with pictures;
   h. cleaning supplies locked away;
   i. facilities inspected regularly for safety (such as no ladders or carpentry items lying around);
   j. accessibility for children and adults with disabilities.
2. Give a task force (same as in #1, or a special one) responsibility for making the church hospitable for children, with measures such as:
   a. nutritious food and drink, appealing to children, available at events;
   b. child-sized furniture in spaces where the congregation gathers, including high chairs in dining area and booster seats in sanctuary so children can see over adult heads;
   c. crayons and paper in pews, or activity kits to be picked up by families on the way into church;
   d. good selection of children's books in church library;
   e. murals and special designated walls for children's art;
   f. safe, secure, and supervised outside play area;
   g. ushers, church staff, and other adults greet children by name.
3. Assign the church school committee or children's ministries work area the responsibility for reviewing and implementing the following:
   a. clean, bright, well-equipped nursery with trained workers and appropriate teacher/child ratio;
   b. age-appropriate toys for nursery and preschool classes;
   c. child care available during worship services and meetings;
   d. all classrooms bright and visually stimulating;
   e. all classrooms clean (standard: that adults in Sunday clothes will sit on floor/carpet and eat from tables).
   f. *The First Three Years: A Guide for Infants, Toddlers and Twos* used for improving nursery facilities.
4. Other _____

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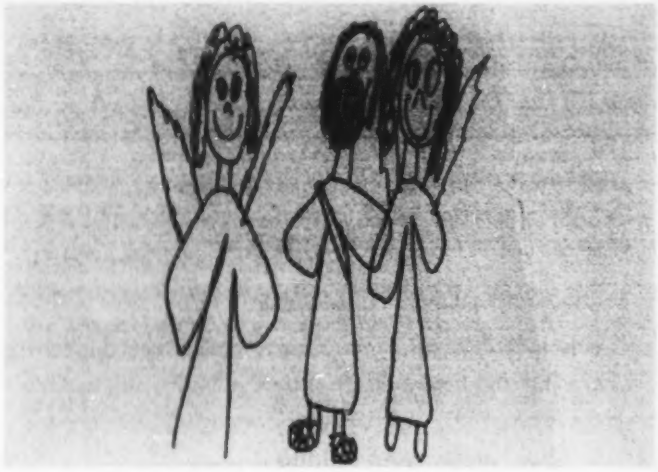


Miranda Griffin. Thaxton UMC, Thaxton, Miss.

C. REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE

GOAL: To implement programs, policies, and procedures that reduce the risk of children being abused in the church and the community. ***in this section, complete #1 and at least one other.***

1. Create a special task force to develop policies and procedures for prevention of child abuse (using *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* or *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*) and present them to the Church Council for adoption. They could include the following:
   a. an ongoing education plan for the church staff and all workers with children and youth on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention;
   b. screening procedures (use of application forms, interviews, reference checks, background clearance, etc.) for workers (paid and unpaid) directly or indirectly involved in the care of children;
   c. safety procedures for church activities such as: having two or more non-related adults present in classroom or activity; leaving doors open and installing half-doors or windows in doors or halls; providing hall monitors; instituting a sign-in and sign-out procedure for children ten or younger, etc.
   d. liability insurance that includes sexual abuse coverage.

2. Present an adult education seminar series on identifying and responding to child abuse using videos "Hear Their Cries" and "Bless Our Children" and hearing from child abuse experts in the community. Keep informational brochures about child abuse in the church vestibule such as *What You Need to Know if a Child is Being Abused or Neglected.*
3. Obtain age-appropriate curriculum for children on prevention, abuse awareness, and self-protection skills, and use them in church school, vacation church school, weekday activities, and/or other settings. Excellent curriculum is available from the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. (See Resouce list)
4. Offer parent support groups and parenting classes on a regular basis to church families and to community families.
5. Organize church and community volunteers to provide "safe corridors" for children walking to and from school.
6. Sponsor a before-and/or after-school ministry that provides a safe haven for children.
7. Other _____

_____

D. HELPING CHILDREN GROW AS FAITHFUL DISCIPLES

GOAL: To acknowledge the spiritual growth needs of children and to engage them in activities that encourage their faith development. ***In this section, complete at least two.***

1. Recruit a task force or committee to evaluate how faith formation for children happens within the congregation. Use United Methodist resources such as *Planning for Christian Education* (Discipleship Resources, Order #DR134, $9.95 1-800-685-4370), *Children and Prayer* (Upper Room Books, Order #UR803, $11.95 1-800-972-0433), "Faith Development of Children" (leaflet, available through the Office of Children's Ministry, GBOD, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202).
2. Provide one new opportunity each quarter for children to practice being disciples of Jesus Christ, to learn about God, to explore the Bible with relevance to their lives today, or to contribute liturgy for use in congregational worship.
3. Appoint a task force or committee to discover ways to help children understand and participate in the rites of baptism and communion.
4. Establish a "Sprouts" program for children in the church and the community, using the resource *Sprouts: Nurturing Children Through Covenant Discipleship.*
5. Include children in the financial stewardship campaign.
6. Design a study series for children in grades 4-6 and middle school using the resource *Building a New Community: God's Children Overcoming Racism.*
7. Provide a learning weekend/series for older children/younger youth and their parents using the human sexuality curriculum resources available from Cokesbury (1-800-251-8591).
8. Provide opportunities for parents (in your congregation and in the community) to learn about raising their children as faithful disciples.
9. Match an adult faith mentor with each child in the congregation (perhaps beginning with infants, kindergartners, third graders or confirmands).
10. Design a 9-week study session for parents on faith development of young children in the home, using *Faith Home*, a study resource.
11. Sponsor an annual mission study series for children, using the ecumenical study theme and materials from Friendship Press. The study should involve children in mission outreach.
12. Other _____

_____

E. INVOLVING CHILDREN IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

GOAL: To re-order congregational life in ways that recognize and involve children and youth as full participants. ***In this section, complete #1 and at least one other.***

1. Regularly involve children in worship by:
   a. welcoming them and encouraging their participation in all worship services, including Communion;
   b. asking children what songs they like to sing and including at least one in each worship service;
   c. inviting children to be worship leaders, read parts of the liturgy, read the scripture, etc. (Be sure to spend time in advance helping them prepare and understand the meaning);
   d. including children in special music times through singing, playing small hand instruments, dancing, etc.;
   e. training children for special tasks such as acolytes, ushers, and greeters;
   f. using children's art as bulletin covers once a month;
   g. numbering each item in the worship bulletin so children can more easily follow the order of worship.
2. Order a copy of *Children Worship!* from Discipleship

Resources, and use as a guide in helping children and adults prepare for worship.

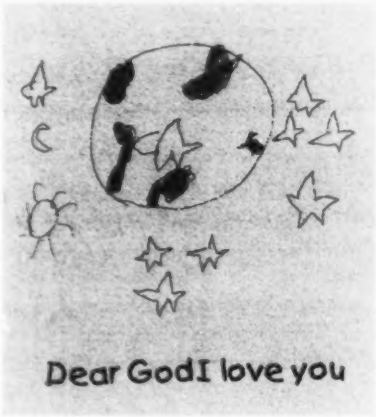
3. If "children's time" is a regular part of your worship service, reverse the process once a month, having the children provide teaching moments for adults.
4. Include children and/or youth as members of all church committees (recognizing that this will mean scheduling meetings when they can attend and otherwise treating them as full members).
5. Include a regular children's column, written by the children, in the church newsletter, or create a separate newsletter by and for children, mailed directly to all children of the church.
6. Institute meaningful multigenerational activities and programs that bring together children, youth, young adults, middle adults, and older adults, such as multigenerational community service projects, multigenerational Bible study, ongoing multigenerational fellowship groups, etc.
7. Other _____

_____

F. REACHING OUT TO CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY

GOAL: To engage in programs and activities aimed at improving life for children and for poor people in the neighborhood around the church as well as in nearby communities that may be quite different economically and/or racially. ***In this section, complete at least any three.***

1. Support public schools by:
   a. monitoring school board elections;
   b. establishing an active partnership with a nearby school;
   c. sponsoring a fund raising event for a local public school;
   d. recruiting members to be volunteers at local schools.



Ben Humphrey. First UMC. Quiteman. Miss

2. Provide a six-week study of the church's relationship to public schools using *Education: The Gift of Hope.*
3. Offer ongoing tutoring and mentoring relationships between adults in the congregation and children in the community.
4. Provide supervised before and/or after-school programs that include:
   a. safe passage (transportation or escorts for walking);
   b. nutritious snack or meal;
   c. help with homework;
   d. a faith component;
   e. recreation;
   f. enrichment experience;
   g. art, dance, drama, music;
   h. computer practice/training.
5. Offer weekly "Parents' Day (and/or Evening) Out."
6. Offer a drug prevention program for neighborhood children and youth, utilizing the resources of the United Methodist Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence.
7. Offer a well-publicized Vacation Church School open to community children.
8. Sponsor a Family Health Fair at the church, with health check-ups, immunizations, various screenings such as blood pressure, diabetes, glaucoma, scoliosis, vision, hearing, etc. Consider sponsoring a blood drive at the same time, so that those who receive have the option of also giving.
9. Provide school supply kits to neighborhood children.
10. Send community children to church camp along with children of the congregation.
11. Sponsor a summer program for church and community children (could be an extension of Vacation Church School or a summer day camp).
12. Develop a community garden on church property, encouraging (and teaching/helping) children and their families to plant, cultivate, weed, water and harvest. Consider including composting and recycling programs.
13. Offer free music and/or art lessons as a ministry of the church.
14. Provide a "lending closet" of costly items families need for children, such as child safety seats, cribs, high chairs, strollers, musical instruments, coats, etc.
15. Provide transportation for pregnant women to prenatal classes and clinics (or sponsor prenatal classes at the church) and transportation for mothers and children to clinics.
16. Sponsor and nurture partnerships between experienced mothers/ grandmothers and new and/or single mothers and between experienced fathers/grandfathers and new young fathers.
17. Other _____

G. ADVOCATING FOR LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC POLICIES THAT IMPROVE CHILDREN'S LIVES AND LIVES OF POOR FAMILIES

GOAL: To become active in organizations, coalitions, and other efforts that seek to systemically improve life for children and for poor persons and families. ***In this section, complete at least any two.***

1. Join a child advocacy network such as United Methodist Child Advocacy Network (CAN) or United Methodist Women's Action Network (WACTION) or start your own in your community or state.
2. Publish child advocacy information and legislative action alerts in each issue of your church newsletter.
3. Sponsor a monthly forum on state and federal legislation, and have a monthly "offering of letters" to congresspersons, governors, the president, etc.
4. Set up an advocacy center or bulletin board in the church, posting information about pending bills affecting children, and setting out postcards to legislators.
5. Hold a community-wide voter registration drive.
6. Arrange transportation to voting polls for all local, state, and national elections.
7. Challenge all candidates for public office to "put children and their families first" by asking them to respond to the following questions and holding them accountable for their answers:
   a. Are children's needs and well-being considered first in evaluating health and welfare reforms, or any new programs or policies?
   b. Will this program or policy make fewer children poor and increase the likelihood of children growing up healthy, educated, and prepared to work?
   c. Will this program or policy make families more self-sufficient, enabling parents to work by providing them with jobs, training, child care, and health care?
   d. Will this program or policy support families in providing care, nurture, safety, and stability to children?
   e. Will this program or policy help the many who have little rather than the few who have much?
   f. Will this program or policy help families stay together and care for their children?
   g. Does this program or policy refrain from punishing children for the actions or inactions of their parents or guardians?
   h. Will this program or policy actually save money in the long run, rather than gain a shortsighted savings that leaves the next generation to pay the price?
   i. Is this program as fair to children as to adults, and to women as to men?
   j. Will this program or policy provide young people with opportunities for a meaningful future?
   k. Will this program develop in children a sense of responsibility for themselves and their communities?

(The above taken from 1996 General Conference resolution on "Putting Children and Their Families First")

8. Hold a Candidates' Forum on Children and Families for all candidates for office. Ask them to state their positions on issues affecting children and families and to answer questions like those in the previous item. Have children from church and community present and orient them in advance about the purpose and how to participate.
9. Participate in Child Watch (Children's Defense Fund) or other direct exposure experience to teach church members about the effect of public policies on children in the community.
10. Other _____

Dee Works. First UMC, Iuka, Miss.

H. RELATING TO CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD

GOAL: To raise consciousness among United Methodists about the lives of children in other parts of the world and to engage in activities that improve their lives. ***In this section, complete at least any two.***

1. Join with others to support U.S. ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (only three countries — Somalia, the Cook Islands, and the United States — have not ratified this internationally recognized agreement). Write to UNICEF for information and hold educational events in your community about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Contact your U.S. Senators and urge them to vote for ratification.
2. Sponsor an educational event, or series of events, on the impact of war on children. Join the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines.
3. Sponsor an educational event on the issue of child labor, in the U.S. and internationally. Contact the Child Labor Coalition for information and resources. Consider joining campaigns like "Rugmark" that encourage people to buy products that are certified not to have been made with child labor.
4. Learn about the international campaign against child prostitution. Contact ECPAT (Ending Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes). Sponsor an educational event for your church and community on this issue.
5. Ask a committee or group of volunteers to research United Methodist mission magazines, *New World Outlook* and *Response*, for articles in the past several years about children around the world. Distribute the articles among members and have one person report each week (during worship, at weekday fellowship evening, or other regular event) on the situation and needs of children covered in their article. (Link this item with #6 below by making an Advance Special donation to a project for children in the featured country).
6. Study the needs and situations of children around the world. Send contributions through Advance Specials to one or more ministries serving children, such as:
   - Child Development Villages in Zaire, #012670-7RA
   - Childhood Immunizations, #982400-7
   - Children and Youth in Costa Rica, #012187-5RA
   - Children in High-Risk Situations in Argentina, #703200-4
   - Street Children in Brazil, #714367-6 or #714490-0
   - Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, #011244-8RA
   - Children Now Program, Philippines, #240135-8
   - The Children's Center, Mississippi USA, #762500-5
   - Alaska Children's Services USA, #931430-6
   - Native American Children's Fund USA, #583581-7

   AND MANY OTHERS - CHECK Advance Specials Catalog or ABC's: Advance Book of Children's Projects.
7. Begin (or strengthen) an annual focus on mission for the children of your church, culminating in an offering by children for the United Methodist "Children's Fund for Christian Mission." Order the resource packet. In addition, order and use with children copies of the *Children's Prayer Calendar*.
8. Encourage children in Sunday Church School and Vacation Church School to get to know children in other parts of the world through pen pals. An organization for this purpose, related to UNICEF, is the Just Like Me Pen Pal Club. Another is Tapori, the children's branch of the Fourth World Movement.
10. Other _____

I. BUILDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORTS FOR MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND THE POOR

GOAL: To institute congregational systems and processes that ensure the stability and continuation of efforts on behalf of children and the poor. ***In this section, complete #1 and at least one other.***

1. Establish a Children's Advisory Council, made up of adults, youth, and children, that meets regularly with the Church Council and the pastor and staff to review the status of children's involvement in the life of the church and make suggestions to appropriate church bodies.
2. Have the Children's Advisory Council annually and systematically evaluate the congregation's ministry with children (including ongoing compliance with this checklist), with the goal of implementing three specific changes or additions.
3. Initiate a thorough evaluation of teacher training for workers with children and revamp the church's training in light of learnings; include training on recognizing and responding to child abuse.
4. Assign responsibility to an appropriate committee for ongoing oversight of the church's role as advocate for poor families and for coordination of activities that demonstrate the congregation's intention to be "A Church for All God's Children."
5. Set one meeting of the church council each year at which each committee of the church reports what they have done and are planning to do for children in the church and the community and with the impoverished.
6. Other _____

A Church for All God's Children

Resources

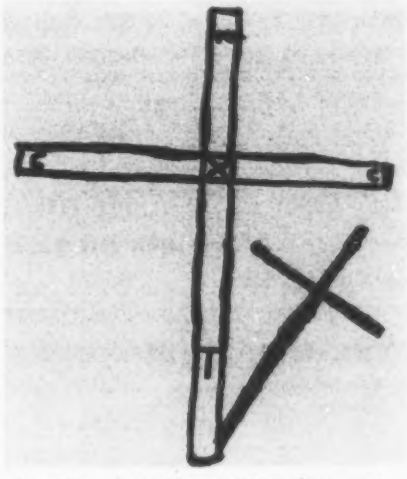
Listed below is ordering information on all books, videos, curriculum, periodicals, organizations and networks mentioned in the Checklist. They are listed in alphabetical order as they appear in the Checklist either by title or by organization.

ABCs: Advance Book of Children's Projects, General Board of Global Ministries. Free for postage and handling from Service Center; P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

Advance Specials: see *Partnership in Missions: Catalog of General Advance Specials*, General Board of Global Ministries. Published bi-annually. $3.00 plus shipping and handling from Service Center; P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

Amazing Grace. Jonathan Kozol. HarperPerennial, 1996. $13.50 from Service Center; P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

"Bless Our Children: Preventing Sexual Abuse," 1993. 40-minute video, $99.00 purchase or $40.00 rental from Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence; 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, 206-634-1903 or fax 206-634-0115.



Matt Bowen. St. Matthews UMC, Madison, Miss.

Brain Research

- NEWSWEEK Special Issue. *Your Child from Birth to Three,* Spring/Summer 1997. Order from NEWSWEEK, Inc., 251 West Fifth St., NY, NY 10019-1894.
- ABC NEWS, Video: "Your Child's Brain." $29.95 from ABC NEWS, P.O. Box 2249, Livonia, MI 48151.
- NBC "Today Show," Video: "Bringing Up Baby." $34.95 from New Video, P.O. Box 2284, S. Burlington, VT 05407.
- Rethinking the Brain Project, Video: "I Am Your Child." $25.00 from Families and Work Institute, 330 Seventh Avenue, NY, NY 10001.

Building a New Community: God's Children Overcoming Racism. Order from Cokesbury, 1-800-672-1789 or 615-749-6113.

Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Abuse prevention religious education curriculum:

- Preventing Child Sexual Abuse, Ages 5-8 ($11.95)
- Preventing Child Sexual Abuse, Ages 9-12 ($9.95)
- Sexual Abuse Prevention: A Course of Study for Teenagers ($8.95). Order from 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, 206-634-1903 or fax 206-634-0115.

Child Labor Coalition, c/o National Consumers' League, 1701 K Street NW, #1200, Washington, DC 20006, 202-835-3323.

Child Watch programs of Children's Defense Fund. Call CDF Child Watch Division, 202-628-8787, for issue tracks and program ideas.

Children's Defense Fund, *Resource Materials for National Observance of Children's Sabbath*, new each year from CDF Publications, P.O. Box 90500, Washington, DC 20090-0500; 202-662-3652. Credit card orders may be faxed to 202-628-8333. Charges are for shipping and handling only: 1-5 copies, $5.00 each; per copy charge is less with larger orders.

Children and Prayer, The Upper Room. $11.95 ($10.16 each for 10 or more) from Upper Room Books, order #UR803, 1-800-972-0433 or 615-340-7284.

Children Worship! General Board of Discipleship, 1997. $21.95 from Discipleship Resources, order #223, 1-800-685-4370 or fax 770-442-9742.

Children's Prayer Calendar Packet, General Board of Global Ministries. Published annually; 8 calendars for $8.00 plus shipping and handling from Service Center, P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

ECPAT (Ending Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes), U.S. office: 475 Riverside Drive, Room 621, New York, NY 10115. 212-870-2427.

Education: The Gift of Hope from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is available from Cokesbury, 1-800-672-1789 or 615-749-6113, ICOP# 792047.

"Faith Development of Children," General Board of Discipleship. $3.00 from Office of Children's Ministries, GBOD, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202-0840.

Faith Home, Dan and Joy Solomon. Abingdon Press, 1997. $99.95 for complete kit from Cokesbury, order #066107.

The First Three Years: A Guide for Ministry with Infants, Toddlers and Two-Year Olds, Mary Alice D Gran. General Board of Discipleship, 1995. $29.95 from Discipleship Resources, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202, 1-800-685-4370 or fax 770-442-9742.

Friendship Press: *Annual Children's Mission Study Resources*. (1997: *A Call to Hope*; 1996: *All Quite Beautiful*). Order from Service Center, P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

"Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse," 1992. 48-minute video, $129.00 purchase and $40.00 rental from Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, 206-634-1903 or fax 206-634-0115.

International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, 2001 S Street NW, Suite 740, Washington, DC 20009, 202-483-9222.

It Takes a Village, Hillary Rodham Clinton. Simon and Schuster, 1996. $10.00 from Service Center; P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

Just Like Me Pen Pal Club, DK Publishing, Inc., 95 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.

Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being. Published annually; The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 701 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21202. Call 410-547-6600 or fax 410-547-6624.

"Listen to the Children," 35-minute video by General Board of Global Ministries. $12.00 plus shipping and handling from Service Center; P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

New World Outlook, P.O. Box 371800, Cincinnati, OH 45222-9963 ($12.00 for one year; $20.00 for two years); *Response* (official magazine of United Methodist Women), PO Box 691308, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1208 ($10.00 per year). Combination subscription to both magazines: $20.00 for one year and $36.00 for two years.

Pockets, The Upper Room. $16.95 for one year subscription or $13.75 per subscription for ten or more to same address from The Upper Room, 1-800-972-0433 or 615-340-7284.

Putting Children and Their Families First: A Planning Handbook for Congregations, Laura Dean F. Friedrich. General Board of Global Ministries, 1997. $4.75 ($4.27 each for 5 or more) plus shipping handling from Service Center, PO Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857 or fax 1-513-761-3722.

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church, Richard Hammar, Steven Klipowicz, and James Cobble, (Prevention Kit with reference book, audio cassette, ideo tape, and training manual). $49.95 plus shipping and handling from Church Law and Tax Report, P.O. Box 1098, Matthews, NC 28106, 1-800-222-1840 or fax 704-841-8039.

Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church, (Working Title) Joy Melton. General Board of Discipleship. Available in April 1998 from Discipleship Resources, 1-800-685-4370 or fax 770-442-9742.

Sprouts: Nurturing Children Through Covenant Discipleship, General Board of Discipleship. $9.95 from Discipleship Resources, 1-800-685-4370 or fax 770-442-9742.

The State of America's Children Yearbook, Children's Defense Fund. Published annually; $14.95 plus shipping and handling from CDF Publications; P.O. Box 90500, Washington, DC 20090-0500; 202-662-3652.

Tapori, Fourth World Movement, 7600 Willow Hill Dr., Landover, MD 20785.

UNICEF Office of Public Policy and Advocacy, 1775 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006.

United Methodist Child Advocacy Network, c/o General Board of Church and Society, 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002, 202-488-5654.

United Methodist Children's Fund for Christian Mission, 1908 Grand Aveune, PO Box 845, Nashville, TN 37202-0845.

United Methodist Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence (SPARV), c/o General Board of Church and Society, 100 Maryland Avenue, Washington, DC 20002, 202-488-5626. Call for information about "Born Free, Stay Free" and other substance abuse programs.

United Methodist Women's Action Network, United Methodist Women, Room 307, 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington DC 20002, 202-488-5661.

Welcome the Child: A Child Advocacy Guide for Churches, Shannon Daley and Kathleen Guy. Friendship Press and Children's Defense Fund, 1994. $9.95 plus shipping and handling from Service Center; P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call toll-free 1-800-305-9857, or fax 1-513-761-3722.

What You Need to Know if a Child is Being Abused or Neglected, 1994. Informational brochure, $.50 each in packets of 25 or $100 for camera-ready artwork for unlimited printing, from Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103, 206-634-1903 or fax 206-634-0115.

A Church for All God's Children

Reporting Form

INSTRUCTIONS: Check each activity that has been completed, making certain that you have completed the minimum number in each category; all activities in bold are mandatory ones. For each completed activity, please attach documentation: a description of what your church did to complete the activity and any supporting materials such as copies of Church Council or committee minutes, bulletin and/or newsletter announcements or stories, newspaper clippings, etc. (Be sure to consult other resources in this packet for full instructions and complete wording of activities, as some have been shortened for the sake of space in the list below).

A. Educating the Congregation About the Needs of Children and the Poor (Complete #1 and at least two others)

_____ 1. **Assess the needs of children in your community by forming task force and using *Putting Children and Their Families First* handbook.**

_____ 2. Celebrate Children's Sabbath.

_____ 3. Hold study series on needs of children and the poor.

_____ 4. Have a sermon series on needs of children.

_____ 5. Hold a series of seminars on needs of children in your community.

_____ 6. Hold a series of educational sessions on new research on brain development in young children.

_____ 7. Offer a "Child Watch" program.

_____ 8. Keep congregation informed through bulletin inserts, newsletters, bulletin boards.

_____ 9. Send pastor and/or church staff to continuing education events on children/poverty.

_____ 10. Other _____

_____

B. Making Church Facilities Safe and Welcoming for Children and Families (Complete #1 and at least one other)

_____ 1. **Evaluate facilities and assure that certain safety protections are in place.**

_____ 2. Make the church hospitable for children by making certain changes.

_____ 3. Review and implement child care facilities for safety and hospitality.

_____ 4. Other _____

_____

C. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse (Complete #1 and at least one other)

_____ 1. **Develop policies and procedures for prevention of child abuse.**

_____ 2. Hold adult education series on child abuse identification and response.

_____ 3. Obtain and use age-appropriate abuse prevention curriculum for children.

_____ 4. Offer parent support groups and parenting classes.

_____ 5. Provide "safe corridors" for children walking to and from school.

_____ 6. Sponsor before/after school program that provides safe haven.

_____ 7. Other _____

_____

D. Helping Children Grow as Faithful Disciples (Complete at least any two)

_____ 1. Evaluate and program for faith formation of children.

_____ 2. Provide new opportunities for children to practice being disciples.

_____ 3. Help children understand and participate in rites of baptism and communion.

_____ 4. Establish a "Sprouts" program, using *Sprouts* curriculum.

_____ 5. Include children in stewardship campaign.

_____ 6. Design study using *Building a New Community: God's Children Overcoming Racism.*

_____ 7. Provide human sexuality learning experience for older children/younger youth and their parents.

_____ 8. Provide learning opportunities for parents.

_____ 9. Match adult faith mentors and children.

_____ 10. Design study for parents on faith development in the home.

_____ 11. Sponsor an annual mission study series for children.

_____ 12. Other _____

_____

E. Involving Children in the Life of the Church (Complete #1 and at least one other)

_____ 1. **Regularly involve children in worship in specific ways.**

_____ 2. Help children and adults prepare to worship.

_____ 3. Have children regularly lead adults as reversal of "Children's Time."

_____ 4. Include children and/or youth as members of all church committees.
_____ 5. Provide a children's column in newsletter or special children's newsletter.
_____ 6. Institute meaningful multigenerational activities and programs.
_____ 7. Other _____

_____

F. Reaching Out to Children in the Community (Complete at least any three)

_____ 1. Support public schools in specific ways.
_____ 2. Study Education: The Gift of Hope.
_____ 3. Offer ongoing tutoring and mentoring programs.
_____ 4. Provide supervised before and/or after school programs.
_____ 5. Offer weekly "Parents' Day (or Evening) Out. "
_____ 6. Offer a drug prevention program for neighborhood children and youth.
_____ 7. Offer Vacation Church School open to community children.
_____ 8. Sponsor a Family Health Fair.
_____ 9. Provide school supply kits to neighborhood children.
_____ 10. Send community children to camp along with children of the church.
_____ 11. Sponsor summer day camp program for community children.
_____ 12. Develop community garden for neighborhood families on church property.
_____ 13. Offer free music or art lessons.
_____ 14. Provide a "lending closet" of costly items needed by families.
_____ 15. Provide transportation to prenatal classes and clinics.
_____ 16. Sponsor partnerships between new and experienced parents.
_____ 17. Other _____

_____

G. Advocating for Legislation and Public Policies that Improve Children's Lives and Lives of Poor Families (Complete at least any two)

_____ 1. Join a child advocacy network.
_____ 2. Publish child advocacy information and action alerts in church newsletter.
_____ 3. Sponsor monthly forum on legislation and "offering of letters" table.
_____ 4. Establish child advocacy information center or bulletin board in church.
_____ 5. Hold community-wide voter registration drive.
_____ 6. Arrange free transportation to voting polls.
_____ 7. Challenge candidates for public office to put children and their families first by posing certain questions.
_____ 8. Hold a Candidates' Forum on Children and Families.
_____ 9. Participate in a Child Watch program.
_____ 10. Other _____

_____

H. Relating to Children Around the World (Complete at least any two)

_____ 1. Support U.S. ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
_____ 2. Sponsor educational event or series on impact of war on children.
_____ 3. Sponsor educational event on issue of child labor.
_____ 4. Sponsor educational event on issue of child prostitution.
_____ 5. Use mission magazine stories about children around the world in reports to the congregation.
_____ 6. Study needs of children around the world, and send gifts through the Advance.
_____ 7. Have an annual focus on mission for children of the church, using *Children's Prayer Calendar* and Children's Fund for Mission resources.
_____ 8. Encourage children to related to children around world through pen pals.
_____ 9. Other _____

_____

I. Building Administrative Supports for Ministry with Children and the Poor (Complete #1 and at least one other)

_____ **1. Establish a Children's Advisory Council.**
_____ 2. Evaluate congregation's ministry with children and make three changes or additions.
_____ 3. Evaluate and revamp teacher training for workers with children.
_____ 4. Assign responsibility for oversight of church's role as advocate for poor families.
_____ 5. Hold annual church council meeting to hear from all committees on work with children and the poor.
_____ 6. Other _____

_____